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# THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

*A Magazine of Architecture & Decoration*



The London County Hall. Detail on Members' Terrace, Embankment Front.

*Two Shillings & Sixpence Net*

*27-29 Tothill Street, Westminster, S.W.1.*

• Vol. LII

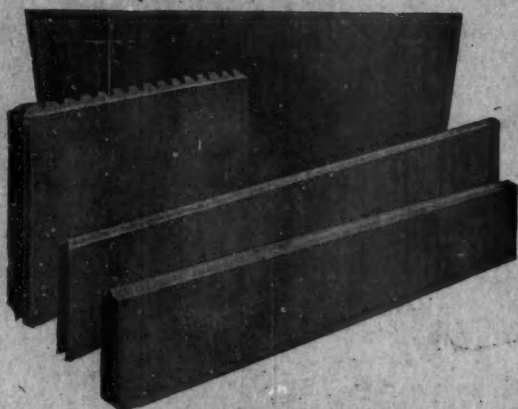
September 1922

No. 310

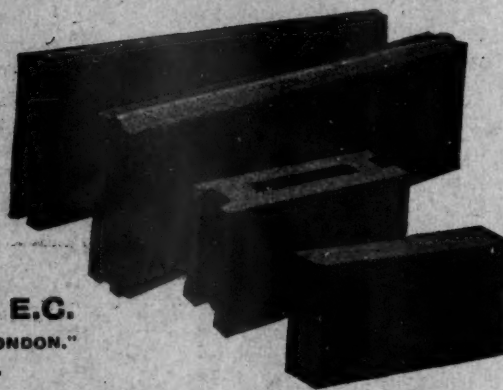
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Plate I.

THE LONDON COUNTY HALL DURING CONSTRUCTION.  
*From a Water-Colour Drawing by William Walcutt.*

September 1922.



# The London County Hall.

Designed by Ralph Knott. Consulting Architect, W. E. Riley.

*"Here is naught at venture, random or untrue  
Swings the wheel full circle, brims the cup anew."*

—RUDYARD KIPLING.

STANDING on Westminster Bridge between the Houses of Parliament and the new house of the London County Council the above lines came back to memory.

The wheel has indeed swung full circle in the period intervening between the Day of Pugin and the Dawn of Knott. In neither building does chance play any part; both express their purpose and their plan by different means, and each in its generation brims the cup anew.

The County Hall displays freshness and vigour in every line and breaks new ground in the unusual use of old motives—and why not? Here is a building commissioned by a great municipality of comparatively recent creation whose business is to set precedents and not to rely upon them. In the first place they created a new precedent by placing their building on the south side of the river, and for its proper setting made a beginning with the southern embankment wall, thereby setting a great example to other Londoners who may build, opening up a new era for Southern London and providing a magnificent opportunity for their chosen architect. That he has risen to his opportunity few will deny, even though the building stands to be criticized with incomplete elevations to the River and Belvedere Road.

A layman talking to me the other day said, "I like the County Hall, but what a pity the central feature is not in the middle of the front." He was quite surprised to be told that some day, when the Council had more money, it would be. There are two other points in connection with the situation of the building which have been criticized elsewhere, and both very important ones:—

1. The Belvedere Road front can only be seen properly in sharp perspective owing to the narrow width of the road.

2. There ought to have been an embankment roadway instead of a footway only on the river front in view of the certainty of the future embanking of the south side of the river.

The former can be remedied in course of time, but the latter is now a "fait accompli," and it is too late to do more than express regret that the Council spoiled their scheme to this extent.

The plan of the building itself retains all the simplicity of the original competition design, but departs from it in the arrangement of offices on one instead of both sides of the corridors, in the provision of an additional entrance from Westminster Bridge Road, and in the much-discussed semi-circular treatment of the centre portion of the river front. The bold differentiation of treatment between the centre or administrative part of the building and wings containing the offices is retained both in plan, elevations, and internal treatment, as also is the treatment of the roofs.

In view of the publicity given to the building in the lay press, and the mass of really irrelevant details that were considered good enough to give the public, it is interesting to notice that the opening ceremony coincided with the formation of the Architecture Club, whose main purpose is to educate the public in these matters and try to make them realize what architecture is and means to them. It will point out that there is no particular merit in a building because as many bricks were used in it as there are dollars in the British Debt to America, or because the corridors on the different floors

would, if stretched out in a single line, reach from Westminster Bridge to Kew.

The County Hall gave much copy to the yellow press on these lines, and there was little, if any, effort in any paper except "The Times," "Country Life," and one or two others to teach the public what the addition of a great new building means to London.

In this case it means a focal point for Disciplinary Government, as well as a structure which, from its very position and size, affects the imagination, or ought to do so, of every Londoner.

The Londoner ought also to be sufficiently educated, or shall I say, interested, to wonder whether this building, upon which several millions of his money have been spent, fulfils its purpose well. To do that he must see the plans as well as the outside, and he must understand the plans and the extreme simplicity of them. He must be told by someone who knows the difficulty of planning a great complex building and what knowledge or skill is required in the process.

He must then be taken into the County Hall, and he will find that if he enters from Westminster Bridge Road he will proceed in a straight line through two courtyards to the Council Chamber. If he enters from Belvedere Road he will also proceed in a straight line to the Council Chamber, and through the latter to a recessed semicircular colonnade into the terrace, overlooking the river, reserved for members and their guests. When he has done this he will realize that the Council Chamber is placed where it ought to be, in the centre of the building, approached directly from all sides and cleverly arranged as regards levels to be reached without stairs except from the lower level of Belvedere Road. He will find abundance of light everywhere; no dark corners or dark rooms; no rooms looking out into narrow, ill-lit areas, such as you find in ordinary office buildings. He will then realize perhaps that the County Council have practised what they preach. He will then, if he is an educated Londoner, walk around the outside of the building. He may compare it in his mind with other great buildings which he knows, the Cloth Hall at Ypres, or the Municipal Buildings at Brussels, the Town Hall at Belfast, the Town Hall of Bruges, or the new Law Courts in Rome on a somewhat similar site, and he will realize that here is something different with some similar features. They all have windows, some have columns and cornices, and some have steep roofs, but none have quite the same combination of the architectural alphabet. In that difference lies the individual capacity of the architect as a designer. As all the world now knows, the County Hall is a stone building on a granite base, with a centre feature on the River side, brought forward and then recessed in a semi-circular form, with plain flanks terminated with square pavilions, and the whole surmounted with a steep-pitched red pantile roof. Critics have said, why bring forward the centre to recess it again? or why surmount a semi-classic building with a typical English cottage roof? or why put angle pavilions with huge arched windows as part of an office block? As well ask Michelangelo why he made his greatest work the painting of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel instead of the walls. As well ask Mr. Sargent why he painted his group

of Generals in one flat tone. An artist feels like doing these things. Perhaps, I do not know, Mr. Knott felt like giving the members a secluded terrace in which to entertain their friends in the midst of one of the most delightful aspects of London and at the same time providing an unusual centre-piece to his building; he also perhaps felt that, while there can be no definite motive for these things, a red roof would give his building, as it certainly does, a definite English homely feeling, and again he no doubt felt that a repetition of his central motive in the angles would help to tie the very dissimilar portions of the structure together. We may criticize each and every one of these features from the standpoint of individual taste; we may contrast the building as a whole with the strict adherence to the classic mould of St. George's Hall, Liverpool, or the Gothic shape of Truro Cathedral; but we must, I think, admit that it suits London, a city of progress and change, very much better in its present guise than if it had been constructed in any slavish copy of a past manner, and that its success in the eyes of those who care for progress lies in the bold departure from precedent, which marks every feature of the building.

If I may venture on a prophecy, I believe that the treatment of the angles will be considered to be the least successful part of the design, but that the Westminster Bridge Road front, with its central archway decorated above by a rich piece of carving and surrounded by a plain wall space before the repeated rows of windows begin, will form the keynote of many future designs, and that the river front will be carefully studied by architects of the future when they have to deal with similar problems.

One of the most interesting features of the building is the arched and open stone vaulted approach from Westminster Bridge Road, though it may be regretted that the open courts which this approach intersects, and views of which can be seen through the open vaulting, could not have been faced with stone instead of white glazed bricks. Time and London smoke will no doubt modify the violent contrast in values between the two materials.

The boldness of the stone detail necessary to carry across the river can here be seen at close quarters, as also can the groups of sculpture by Mr. Cole which surmount the windows of the principal floors at the angle pavilions. These do not

carry across the river in the way that the great mass and simple detail of the building itself does.

On the Belvedere Road front, the main entrance is marked by a colonnade of coupled instead of single Ionic columns as on the river front, surmounted with a high blocking course or parapet behind which the tile roof is hidden. It is a massive piece of design in itself, but so out of scale with the small buildings opposite that until this part of the town is rebuilt and a proper space provided in front it cannot be fairly judged.

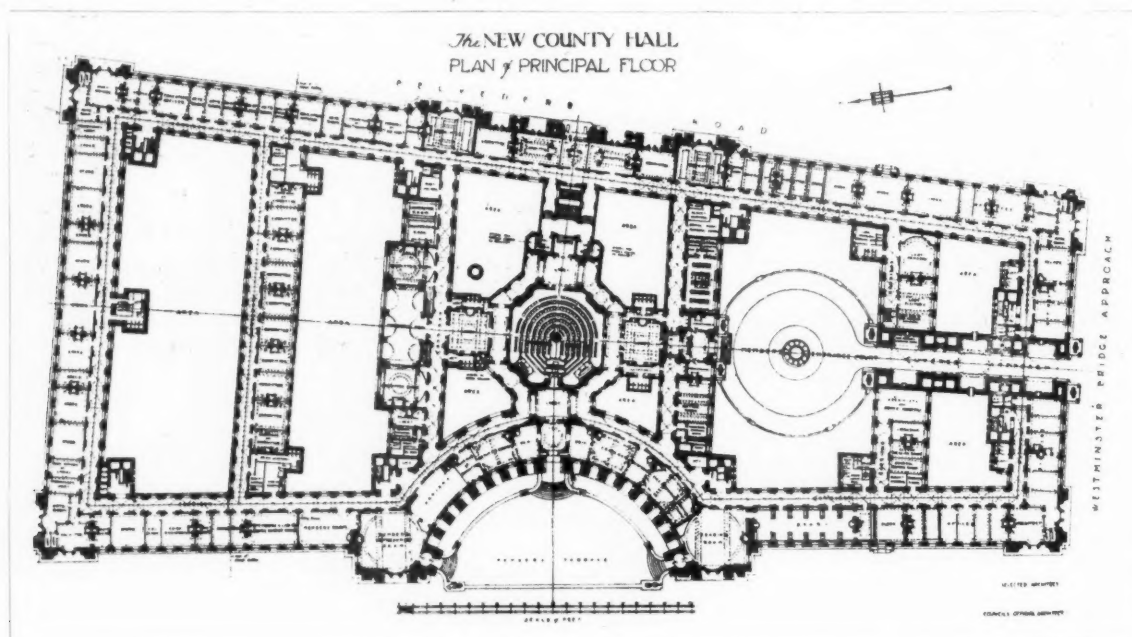
The photographs and plan published in this issue show more clearly to architects than any description of mine can the technical merits of the building, but the interior cannot be photographed adequately in monotone, so much of the effect being dependent on simple lines and detail reinforced with rich marbles and the colouring of the woodwork and furnishings. Especially is this noticeable in the Council Chamber itself, a lofty octagonal room some 60 ft. wide by 45 ft. high.

The seats for the Councillors are made of oak brought (probably by some lime process) to a beautiful silvery grey, and covered with a deep orange leather. The carpet is blue. The room is surrounded by a high dado of Cippolino marble in a black Belgian frame, above which are the four galleries for the press and public, divided from the hall with a colonnade of Vein Dorée marble monoliths with very beautiful figuring. The remainder of the walls and ceiling are a creamy white. The whole effect is striking.

After the Council Chamber there is much to interest the architect and the layman in the treatment of the entrance and staircase from Belvedere Road, the library, committee rooms, and other semi-public departments on the principal floor. Much time and thought has been given to each, and it is to be regretted that furniture out of keeping with the design of the rooms is being installed. In these days of economy the Council must do this, but some day it is to be hoped that their architect will be asked to complete his design in this respect. Tables that fit, leather-covered chairs which harmonize with the delicate colour scheme which he has devised, would be infinitely preferable than the odds and ends which are now being collected and distributed amongst the various rooms.

MAURICE E. WEBB.

[The majority of the photographs are by Mr. F. R. Yerbury.]



PRINCIPAL FLOOR PLAN OF THE LONDON COUNTY HALL.

THE LONDON COUNTY HALL.

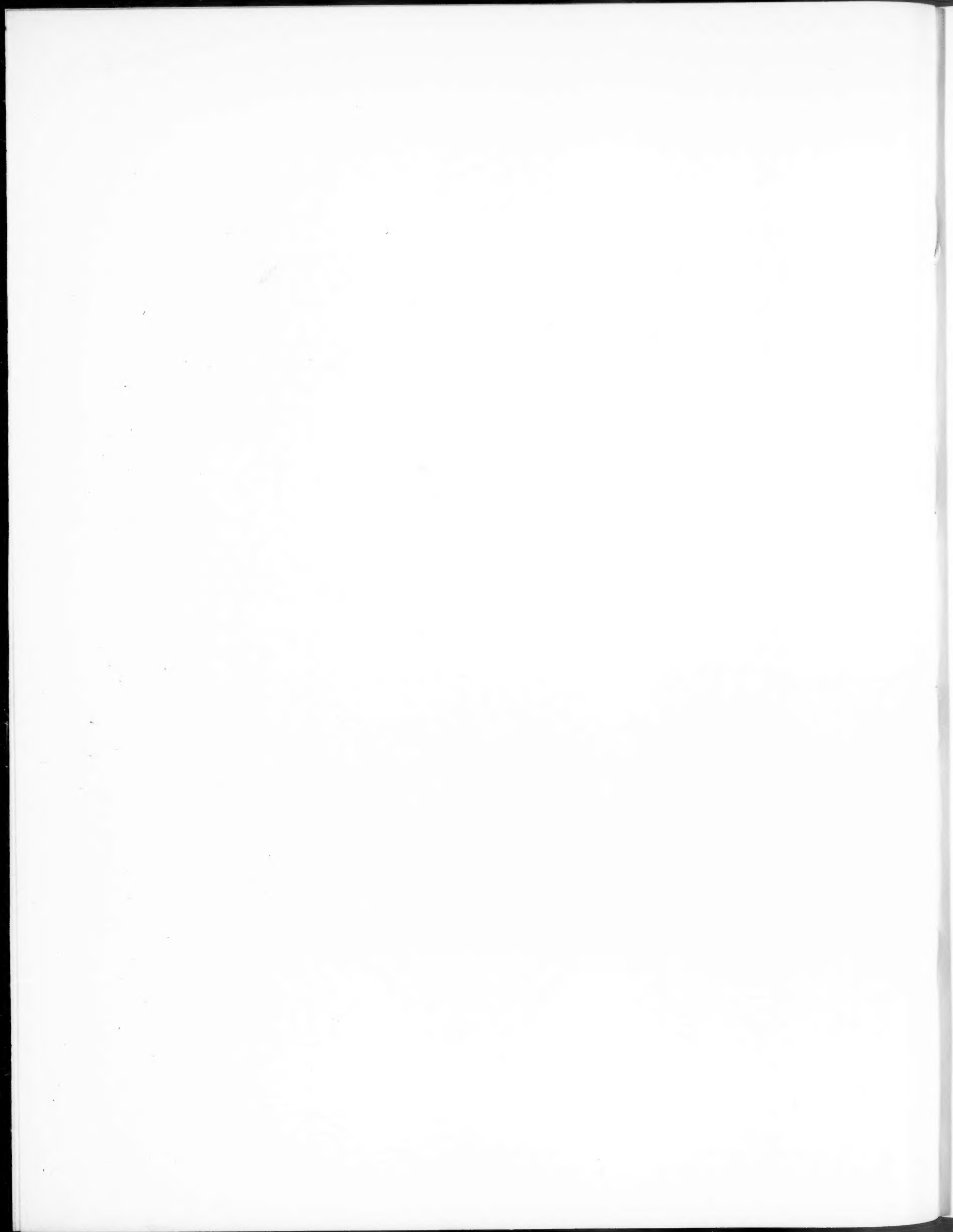


Plate II.

*From a Pencil Drawing by Walter M. Keesey.*

September 1922.







VIEW FROM MEMBERS' TERRACE.



BELVEDERE ROAD FRONT.

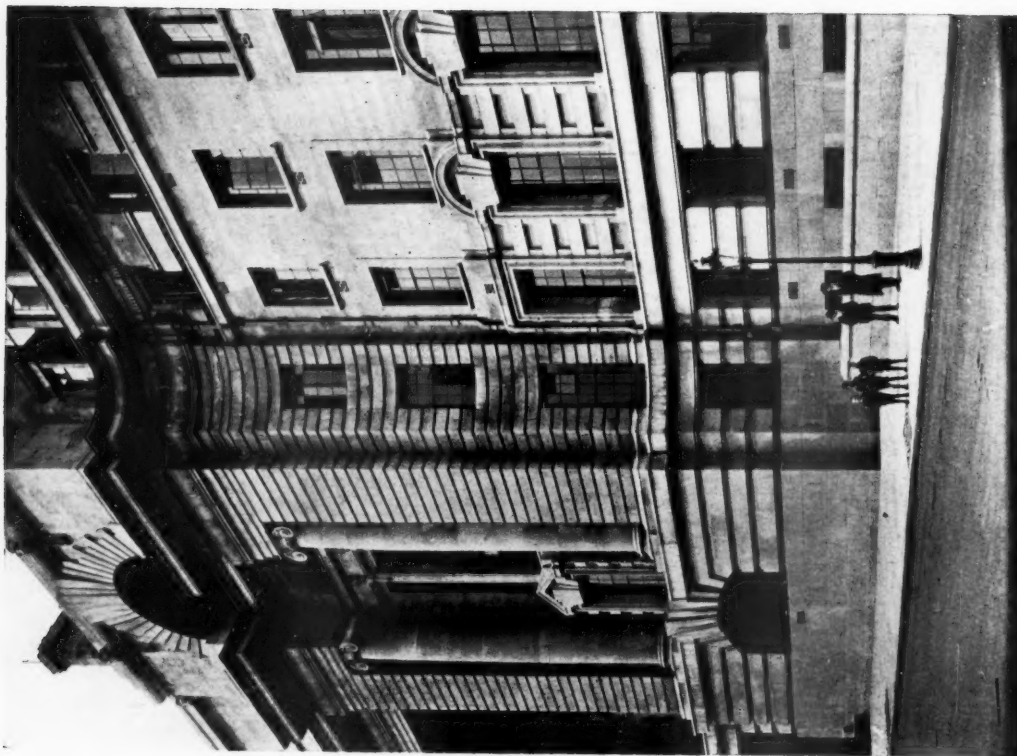




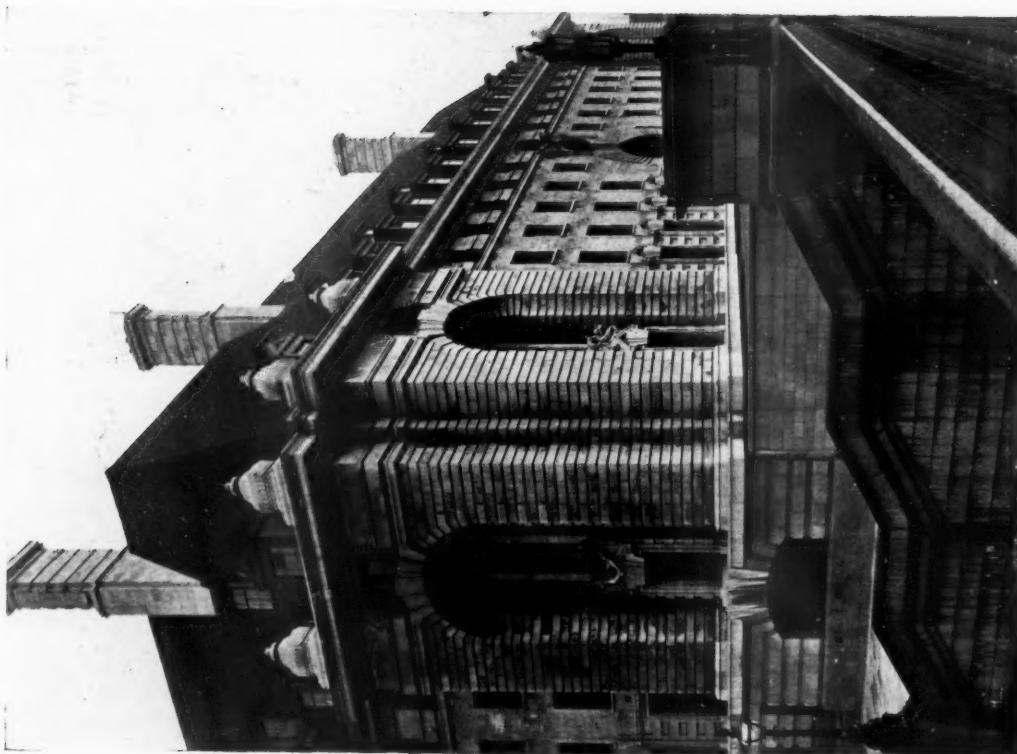
DETAIL, BELVEDERE ROAD FRONT.



DETAIL OF ENTRANCE, BELVEDERE ROAD



DETAIL, BELVEDERE ROAD FRONT.



VIEW FROM WESTMINSTER BRIDGE.

THE LONDON COUNTY HALL.

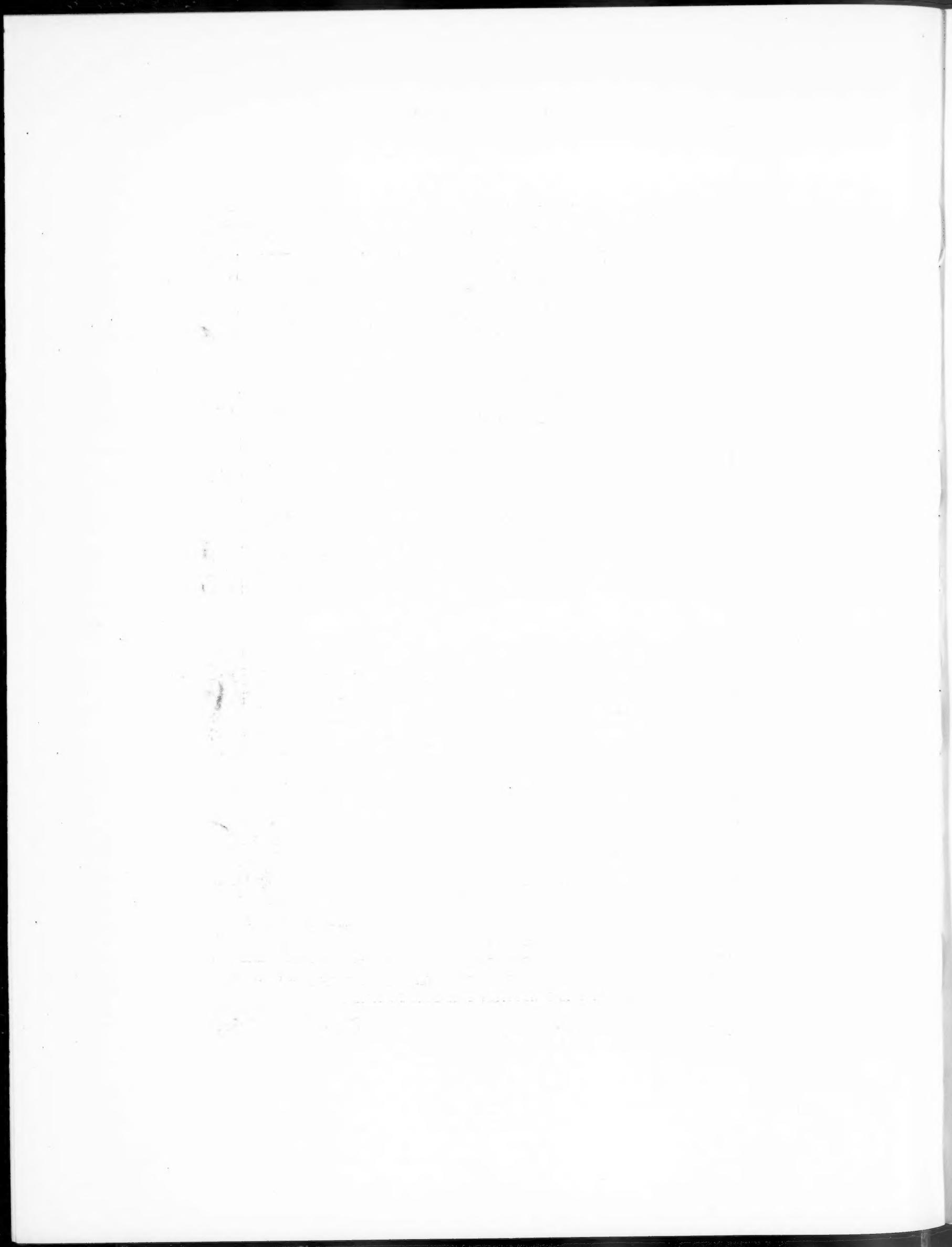


Plate III.

September 1922.

ENTRANCE FROM WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD.







ENTRANCE FROM WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD.



DETAIL IN ENTRANCE, WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD.



COURTYARD, WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD ENTRANCE.

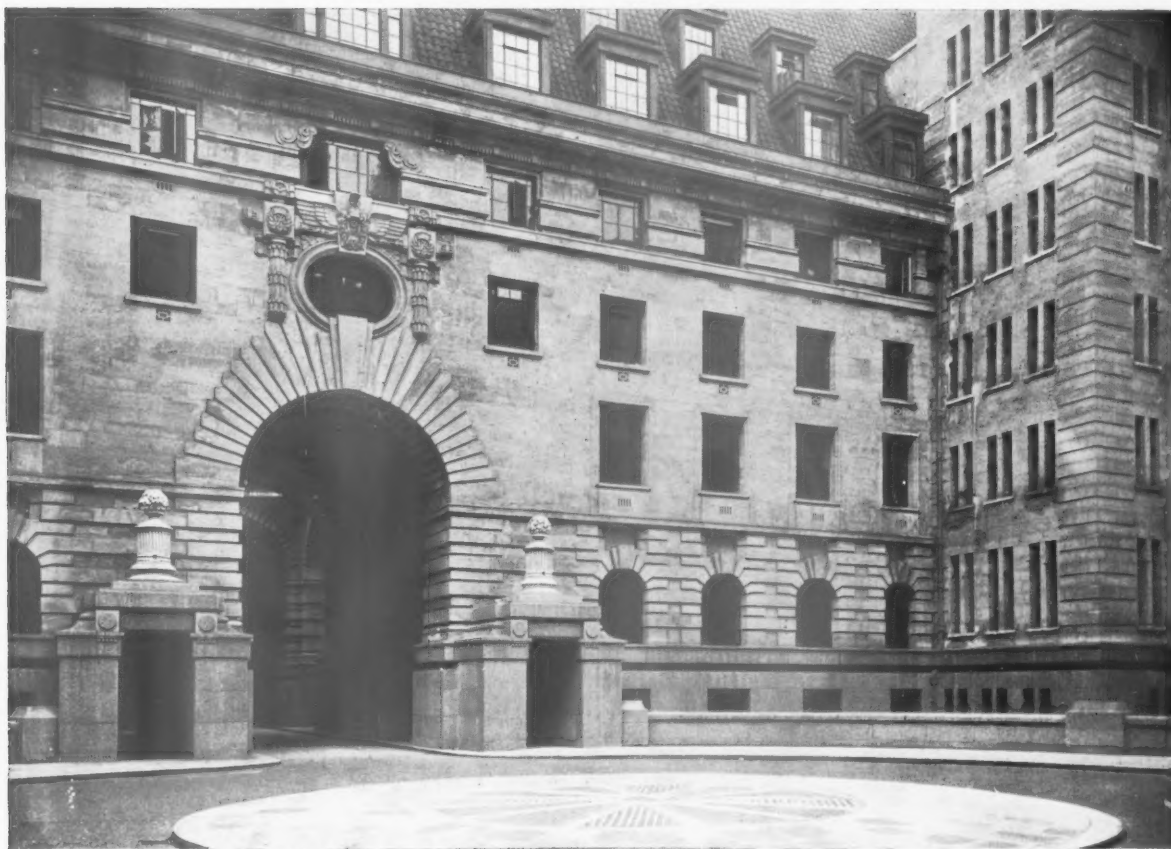




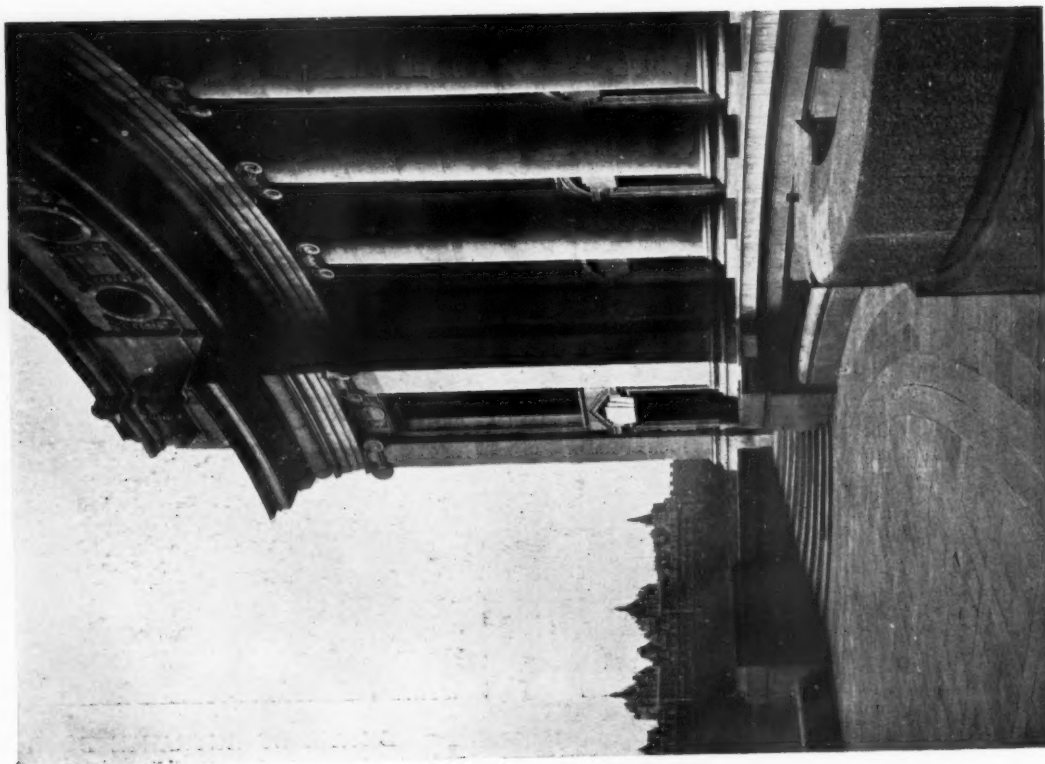
ENTRANCE IN COURTYARD.



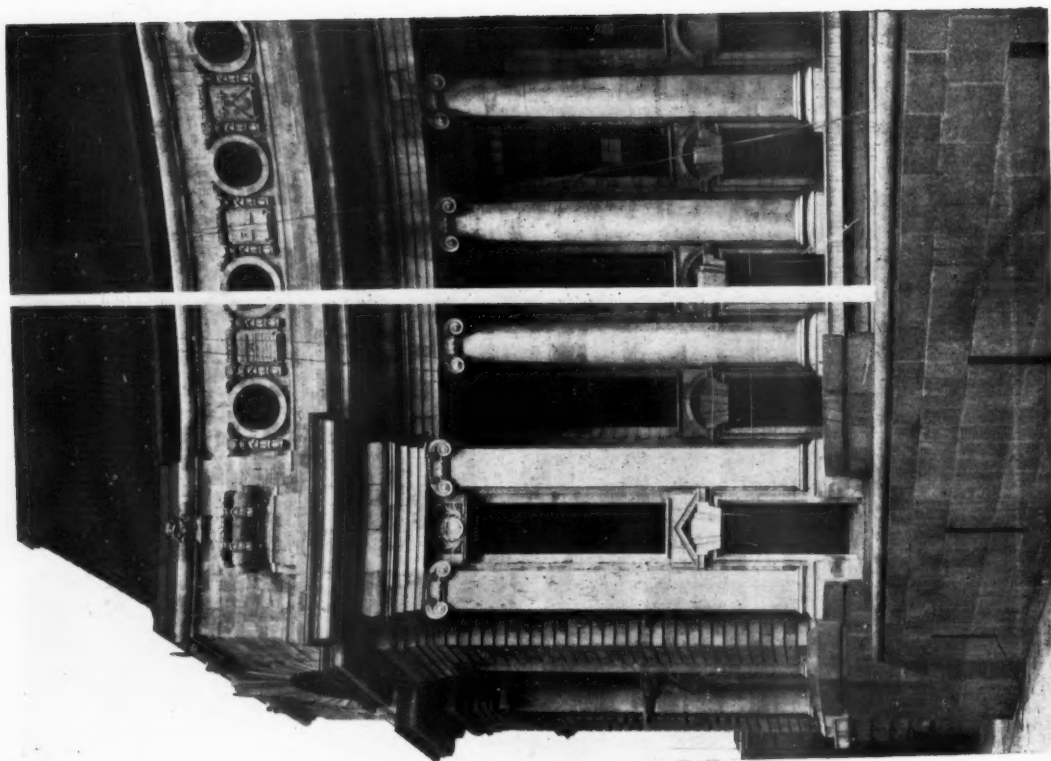
DETAIL OF ENTRANCE DOORWAY.



VIEW IN COURTYARD.



DETAIL ON MEMBERS' TERRACE, EMBANKMENT FRONT.



DETAIL FROM EMBANKMENT FRONT.

THE LONDON COUNTY HALL.

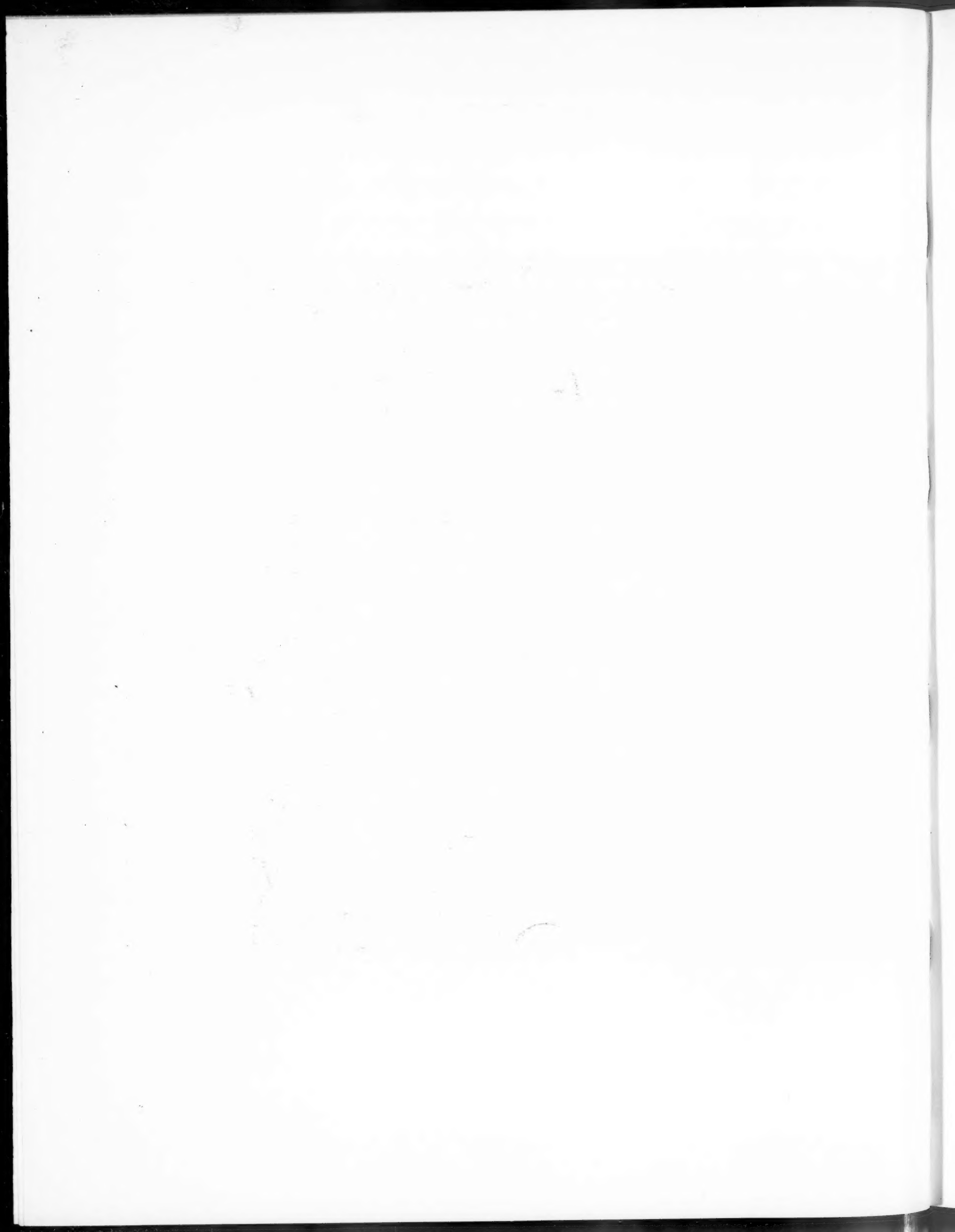


Plate IV

September 1922.

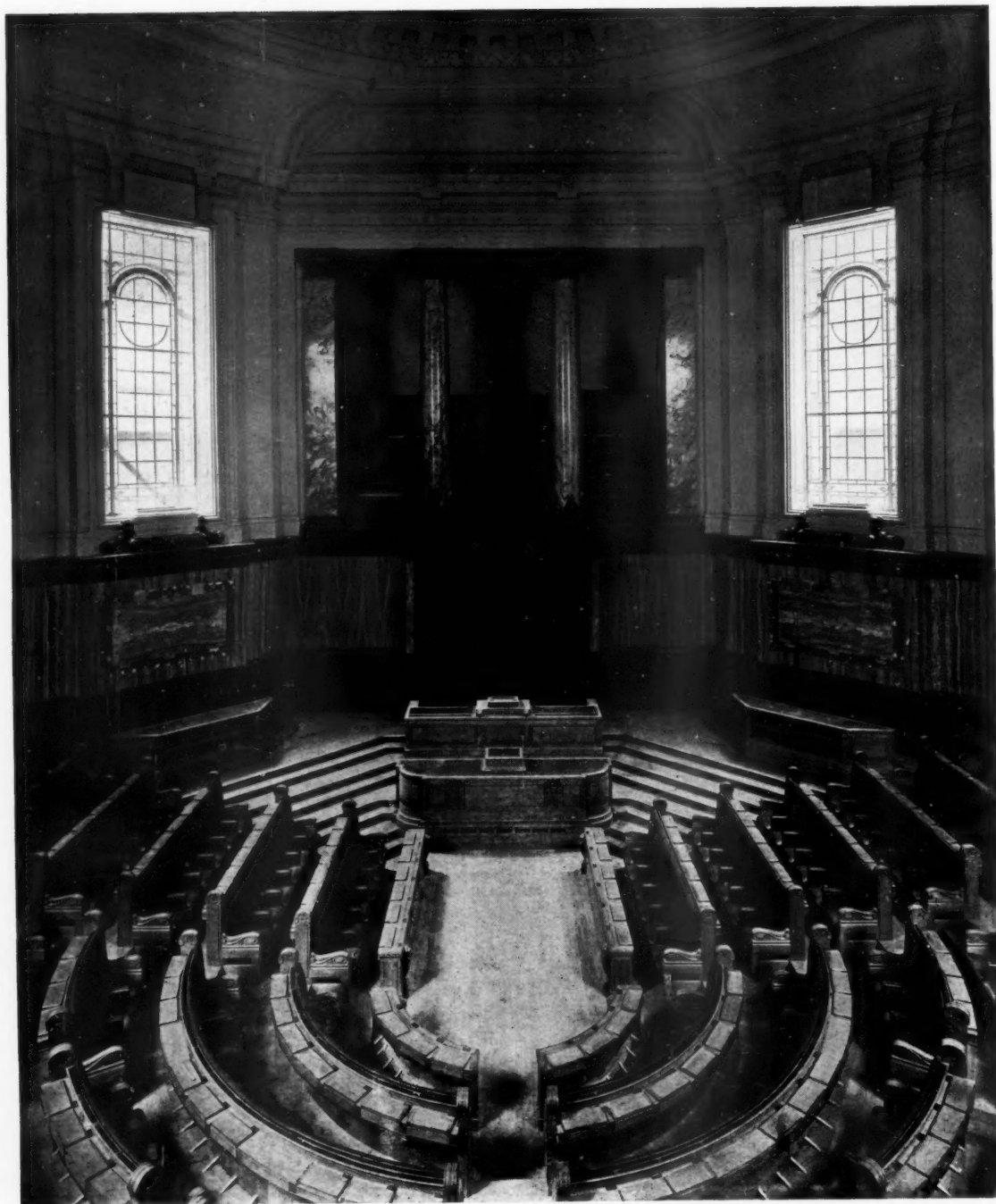
THE RIVER FRONT.







ENTRANCE HALL FROM BELVEDERE ROAD.

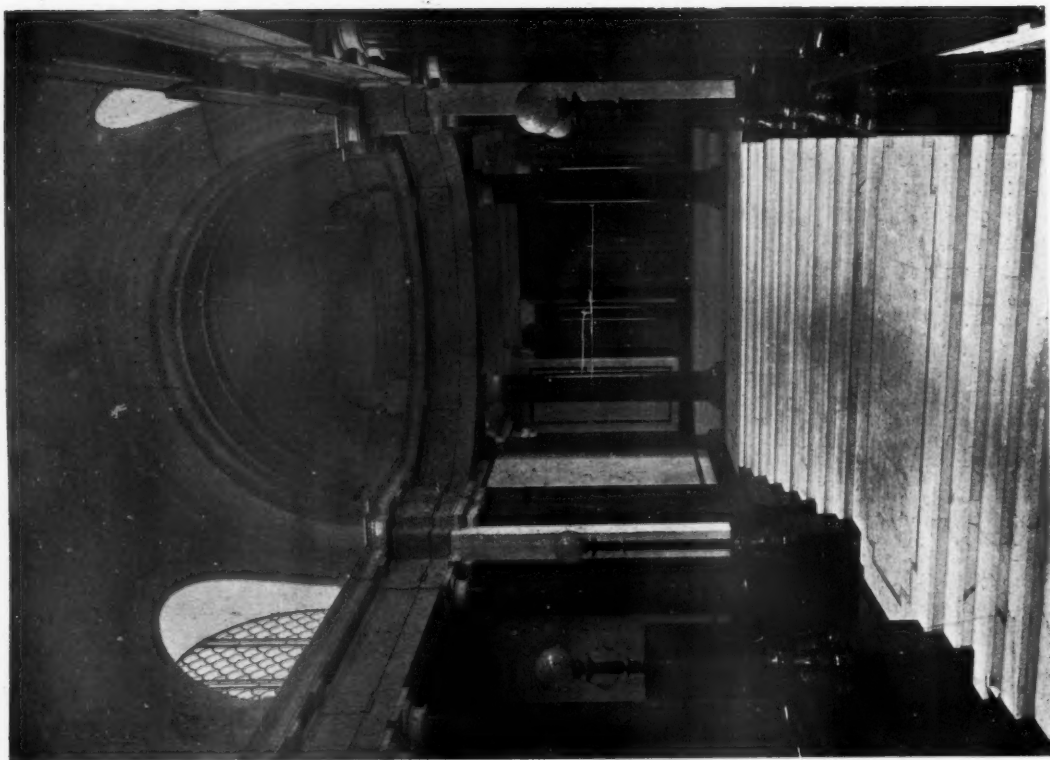


COUNCIL CHAMBER.



COUNCIL CHAMBER: CHAIRMAN'S SEAT.





MAIN STAIRCASE TO COUNCIL CHAMBER.



CHIMNEYPiece IN THE LADY MEMBERS' ROOM.

## Wells.

THE accepted way of approaching Wells is by the Shepton Mallet road. I prefer the direct road from Frome along the ridge of the Mendips. The man who is not satisfied with the journey from London through Guildford, Farnham, Winchester, Romsey, Salisbury, and Frome to Wells must have hit on a bad day, or be hard to please. I especially commend the distant view of Salisbury from the Romsey approach, and Wells from the Frome (direct) road.

"When we reach its walls, we find springing from the azure depths of crystalline pools, from emerald lawns and arching trees, the home of cawing rooks and soaring pigeons," is the guide-book description. It is not quite like that, but this cathedral has been rather fortunate in preserving round it an architectural entourage which on the whole is distinctly helpful. It owes to the fact that it was built for secular canons its survival through the Reformation practically intact, with its Vicars' Close, Deanery, Palace, bridges, porches, gates, and many of the Canons' houses.

The west front will probably, at first sight, be a disappointment to those who have heard of its reputation, but it is one of those things which improve on longer acquaintance. The towers, Perpendicular on the top of Early English stumps, must surely be one of the most successful solvings of a difficult problem. They are devoid of any terminating pinnacles or other free ornament, and are, to me, among the most beautiful things in the world. The front was designed as a basis for sculpture, with screens and niches containing both secular and ecclesiastical history in figures and groups, about which, although they are English, even Ruskin was enthusiastic. The central portion between the towers seems to me a little wanting, as if some Early English fragments had been left about, collected, and put up later, and as if there were not enough to make up an adequate composition.

Wells is best known for the extraordinary engineering feat by which the piers supporting the central tower were kept from crumbling inwards; it is bold in its conception, brutal in

its detail, but it is effective. The approach to the Chapter House, another engineering feat, is, on the other hand, in every way successful. A stair of considerable length and impressive dimensions leads at first straight, and then with gradual sweeping winders, till it turns at right angles, by a most triumphant and delightful double arch, into a Chapter House of surpassing architectural merit. From this, Bishop Beckington extended a further stair going straight on, without materially altering a step, without wasting space on landings, and not only not spoiling the Chapter House, but actually improving it. This stair of Beckington's leads across a bridge, known as the Chain Gate, to the common room or hall of the vicars choral, which with the other stair (leading down to the Vicars' Close), the library, and its appurtenances, is one of the most complete Gothic secular buildings in the country.

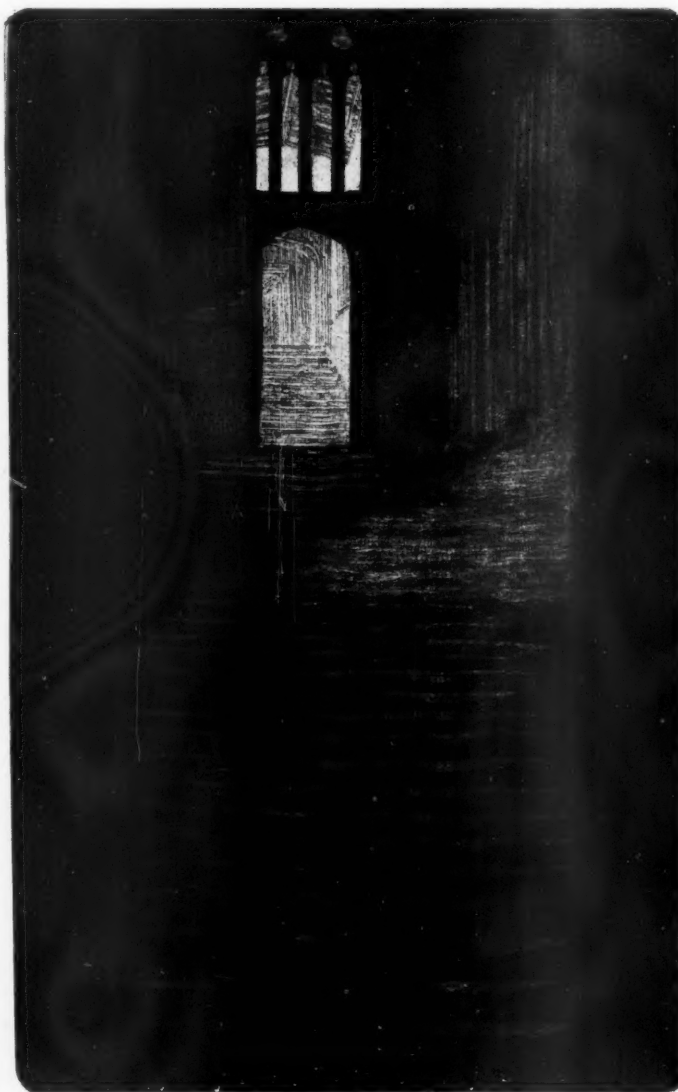
The Chantries in the nave and the carving of the nave caps are among the other most interesting features of the cathedral. The latter are charming in their design, execution, humour, and vigorous caricature; the carver keeps his joke to himself, and his handiwork from the hands of the despoiler, for his work is well out of reach, and can hardly be appreciated except from a 16 ft. ladder.

The visitor is shown round the Palace for a small fee. The Palace was despoiled during the Commonwealth to repair the Deanery. Parker of "Glossary" fame lived for a long time in one of the houses of the Vicars' Close.

The town of Wells has altered little in the last hundred years. Almost inaccessible

by railway, and off the beaten track, it has been little in danger of development. With the expansion of motor traffic, and particularly with the advent of charabancs, it has become a popular excursion. May we hope that such development as will ensue from its increased prosperity will be guided by hands which will preserve rather than "improve" those settings (I am speaking of the shops and houses) which have so great a bearing on the pleasure or otherwise of a visit to one of our cathedral cities.

H. F.



STAIRS TO CHAPTER HOUSE.

*From an Etching by Harold Falkner.*

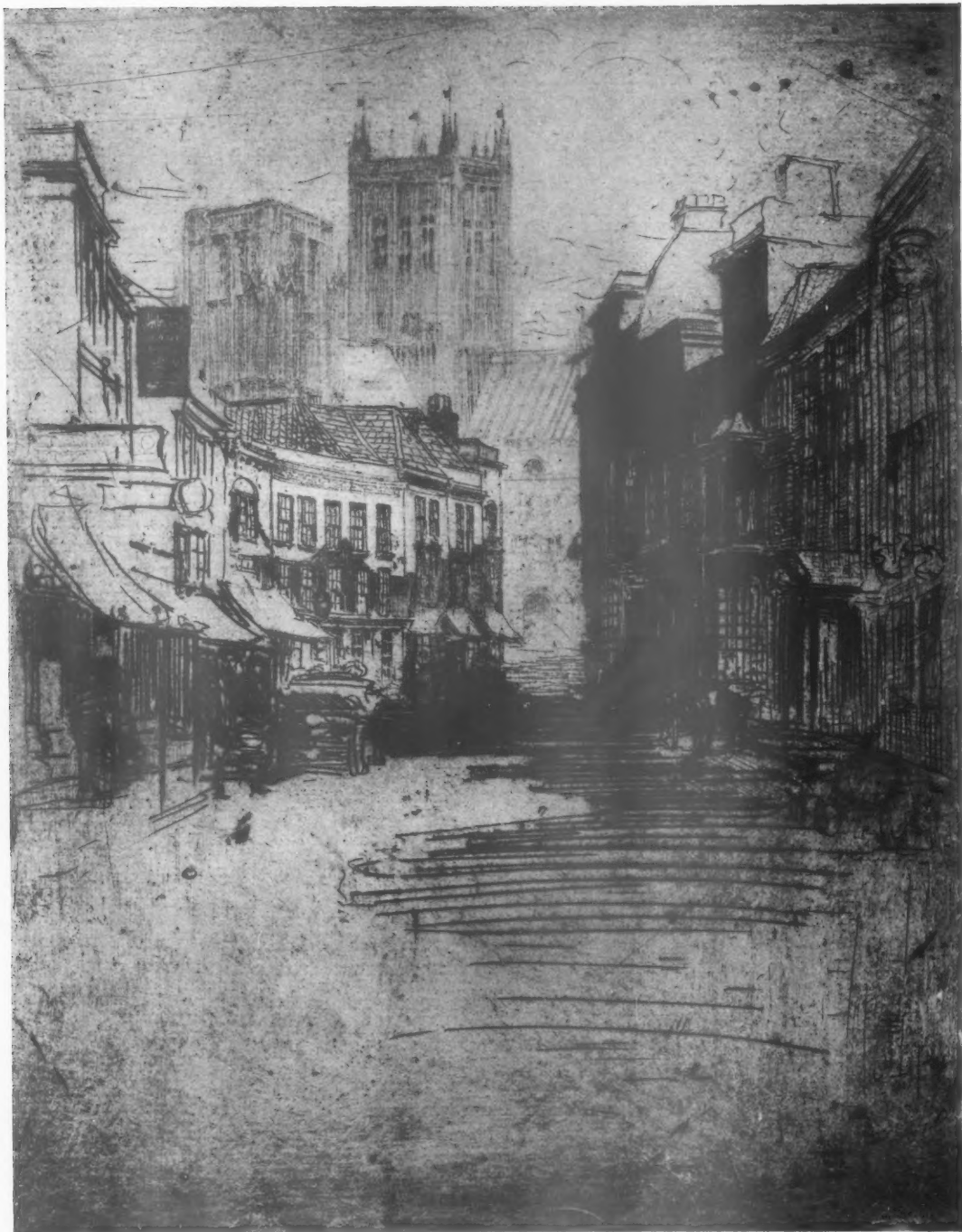


Plate V.

September 1922.

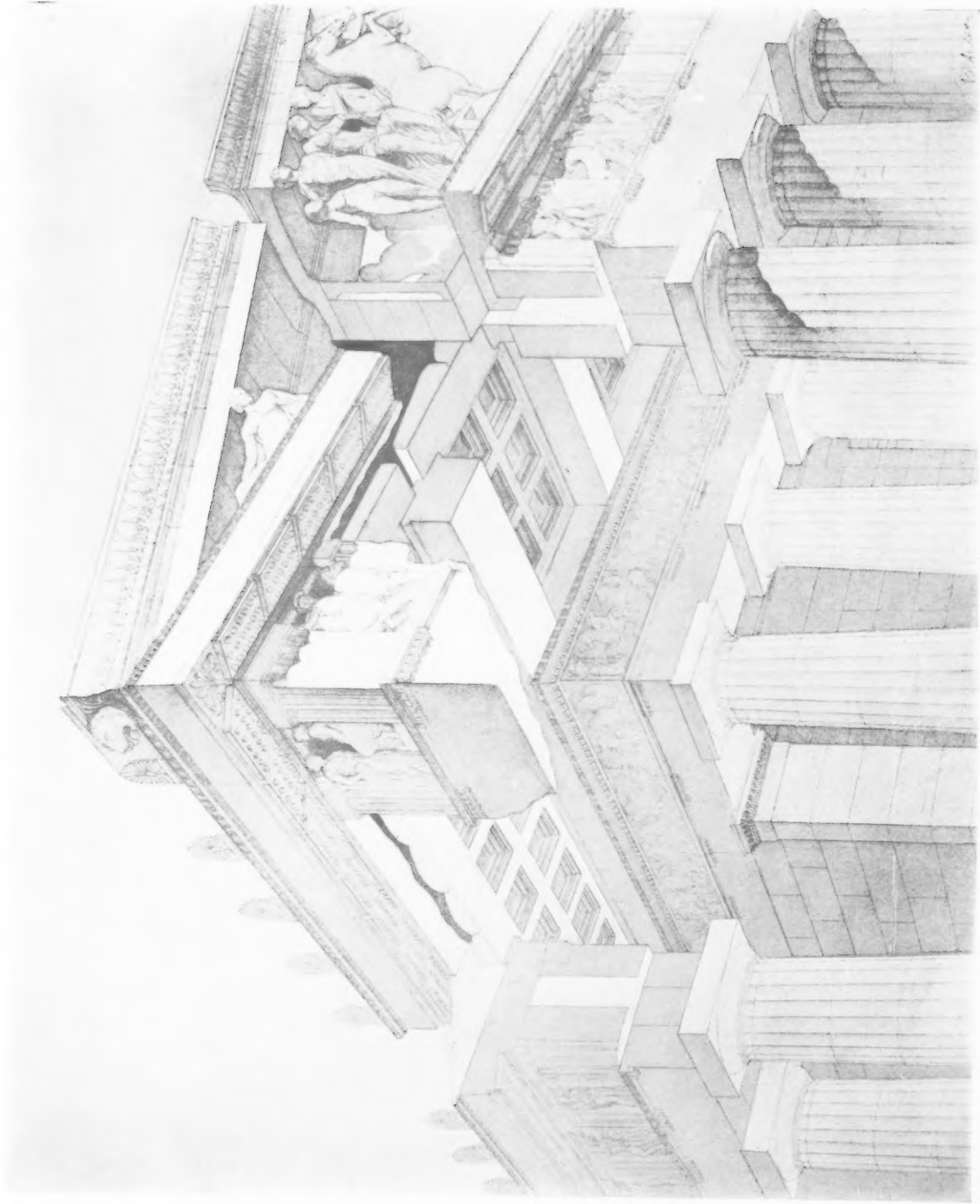
A VIEW OF WELLS.

*From an Etching by Harold Falkner.*



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## THE PARTHENON.



*From a Drawing by Basil E. Allen, A.R.C.A.*

# Selected Examples of Interior Decoration.

*In Continuation of "The Practical Exemplar of Architecture."*



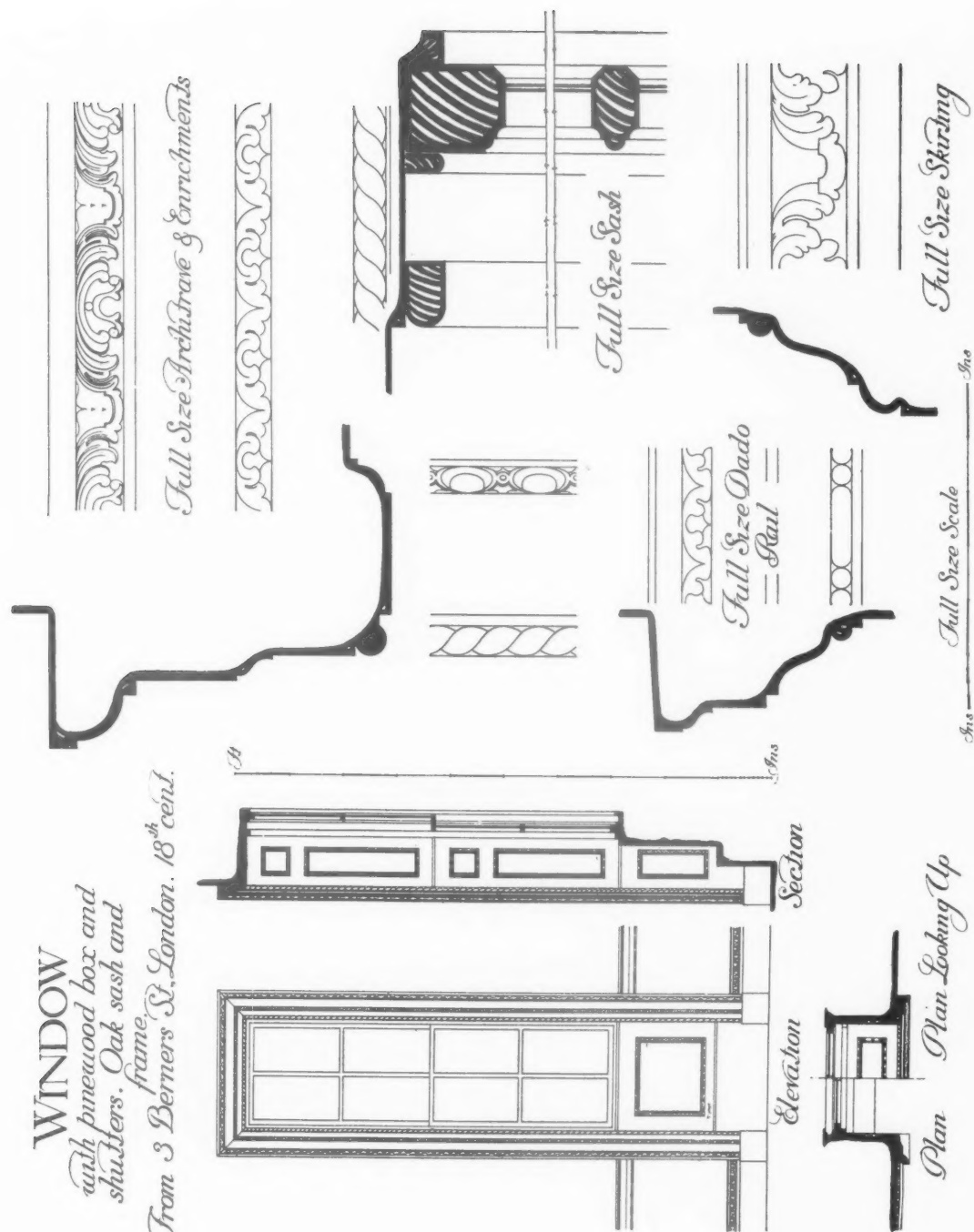
*Photo: Architectural Review.*

WINDOW FROM NO 3 BERNERS STREET, LONDON.

*Now in the Victoria and Albert Museum.*

WINDOW  
with pinewood box and  
shutters. Oak sash and  
frame.

From 3 Berners St. London. 18<sup>th</sup> cent.



Measured and Drawn by Christopher J. Woodbridge.



# The Parish Church of St. Paul, Deptford.

Thomas Archer, Architect.

ONE of the fifty churches to be built in and around London under the powers of Queen Anne's Act, St. Paul's, Deptford, deserves to be better known and appreciated, not only as a fine piece of architecture, typical of its time, but as a work strongly marked with the individuality of its designer.

If we cannot rank Thomas Archer as high as some of his contemporaries, we must admit that he had a power of stately composition in the grand manner much above the average. He was the son of Thomas Archer, M.P. for Warwick in the reign of Charles II. That he was a pupil of Vanbrugh's is self-evident, for his work both in general treatment and in detail shows in no small degree his master's characteristic handling of classical architecture. When Vanbrugh was appointed Surveyor-General of the fifty churches he gave the carrying out of them to some of his pupils. To Archer were allotted those of St. John the Evangelist at Westminster, and St. Paul's, Deptford, which may tend to show that the master had a good opinion of his pupil's ability.

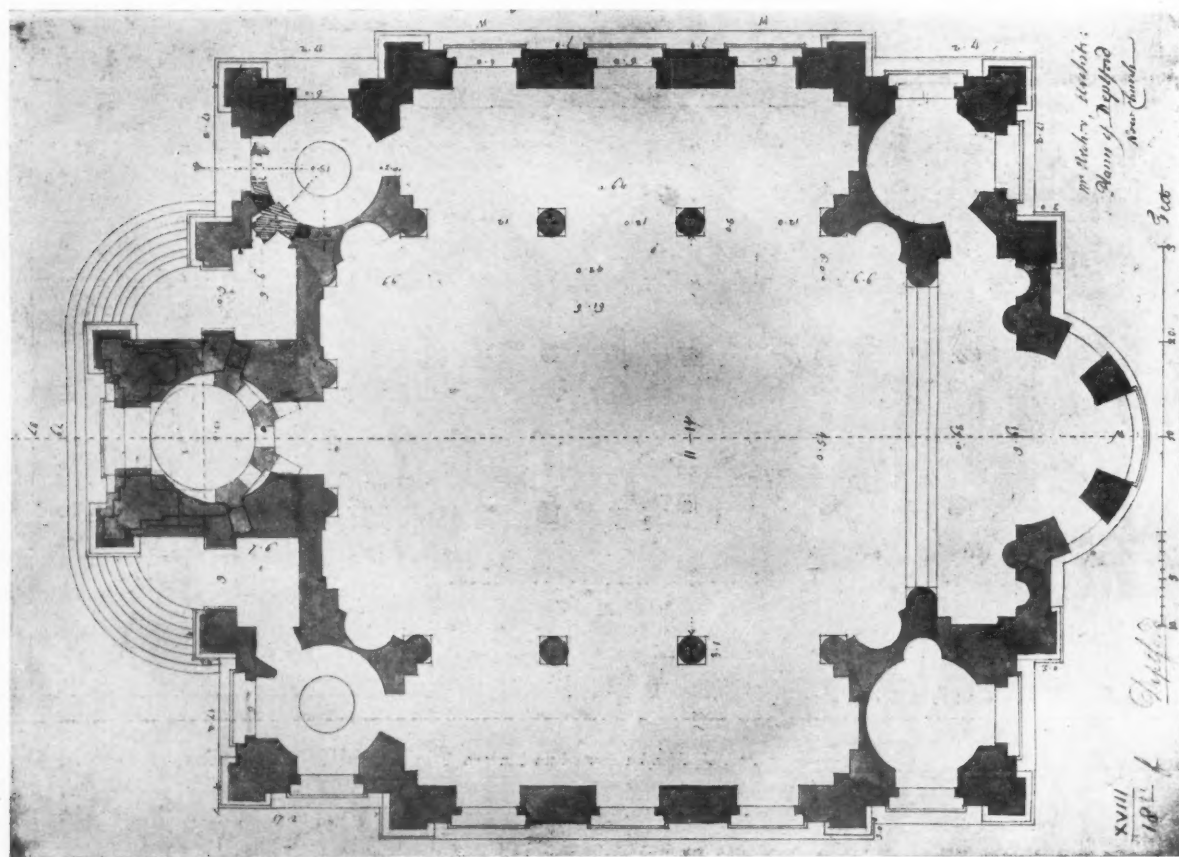
Owing perhaps to his connexion with the county of Warwick, Archer had, in 1711, built the church of St. Philip in Birmingham, whose finely designed tower still holds itself proudly above the welter of that city; and, if Walpole is

right, he was architect of the house of Heythrop, in Oxfordshire, erected in 1705. So he had added experience to his other qualifications when he came to build at Westminster and Deptford.

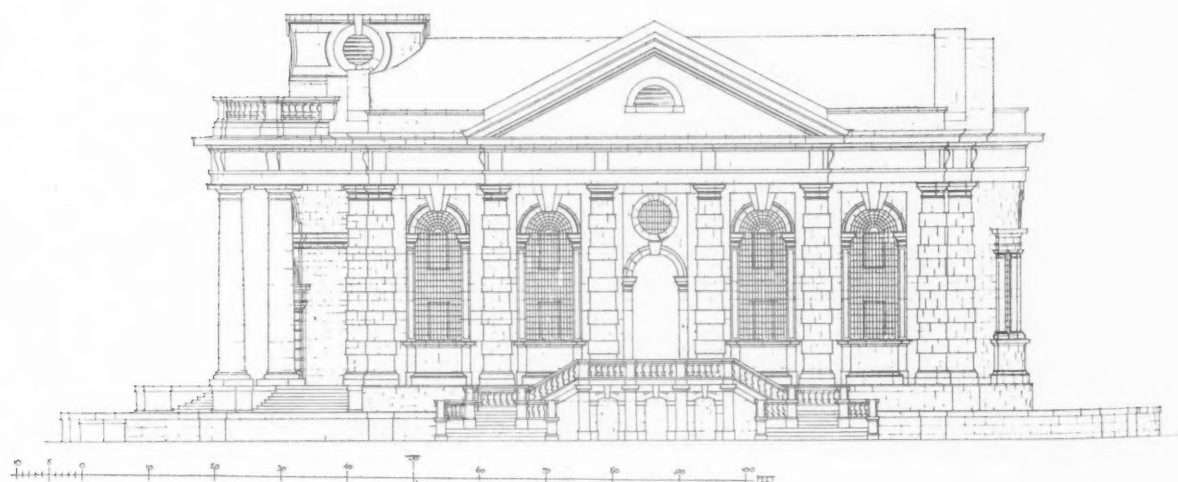
Besides practising as an architect, Archer held the post of Groom-Porter in the Royal households of Queen Anne, George I, and George II. From the sixteenth century the principal functions of this official were to regulate all matters connected with gaming within the precincts of the Court, to furnish cards, dice, etc., and to decide disputes at play. To us the combination of employments seems a strange one. To be an architect by day and a Court *croupier* by night must have meant a strenuous life. Perhaps it had its compensations, for it may well have been that the emoluments of the Groom-Porter were greater than those of the architect.

The ground was bought as early as 1712, but it was not until 1730 that the church was dedicated. The building must have been going on at the same time as St. John's, Westminster, for the latter was dedicated in 1728. Few have had a good word to say for St. John's; but, whatever one may think of the exterior, it is only fair to Archer to remember—it is on record\*

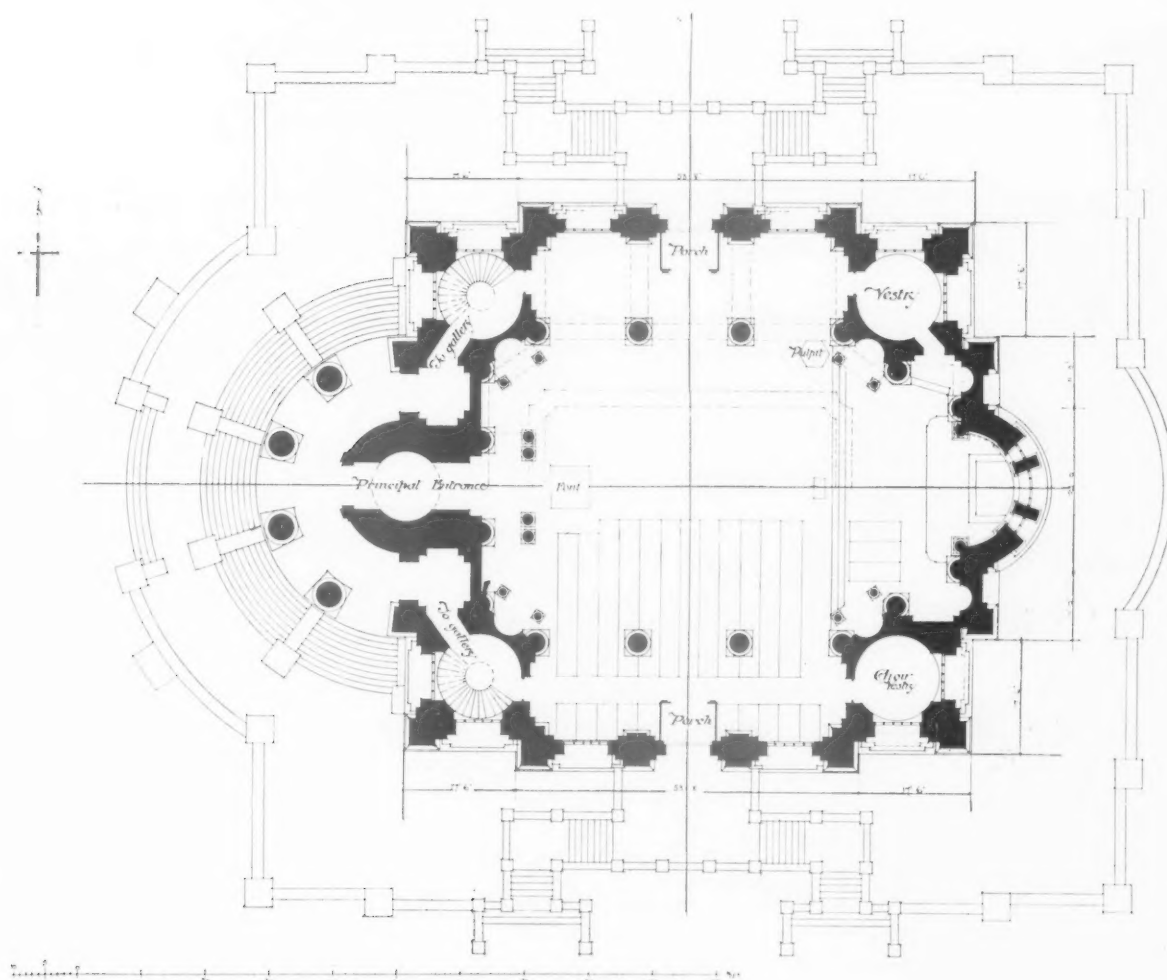
\* Prints in the "Crowle" copy of Pennant's London (British Museum).



PLAN

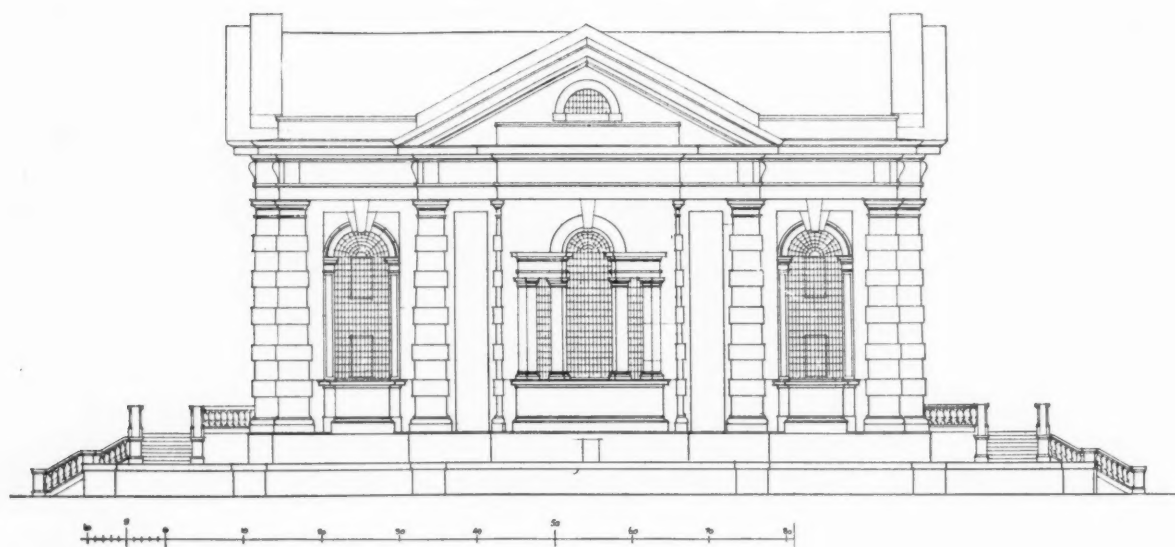


SOUTH ELEVATION.

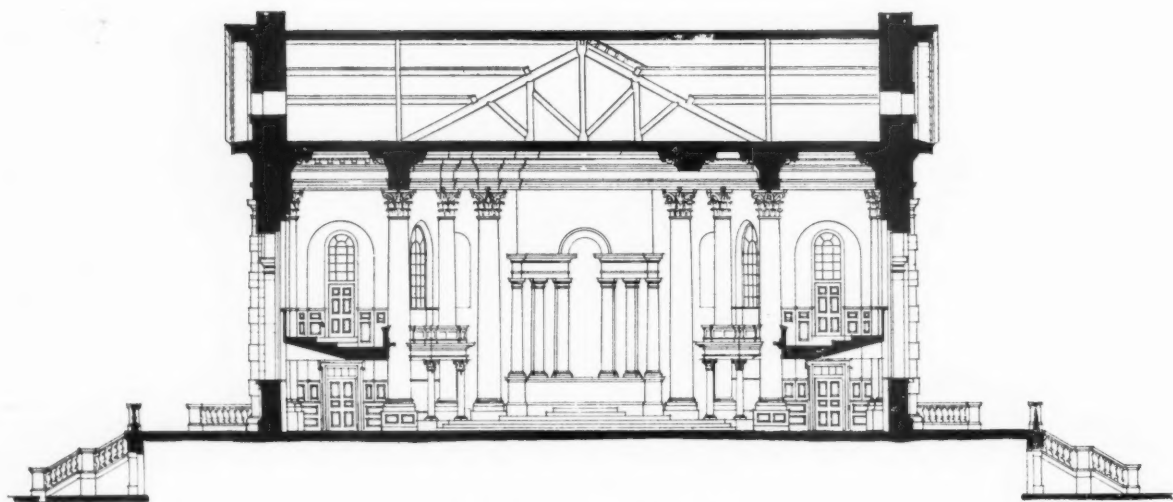


PLAN.

Measured and Drawn by T. J. Bee.



EAST ELEVATION.



SECTION LOOKING EAST.

*Measured and Drawn by T. J. Bee.*

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, DEPTFORD.

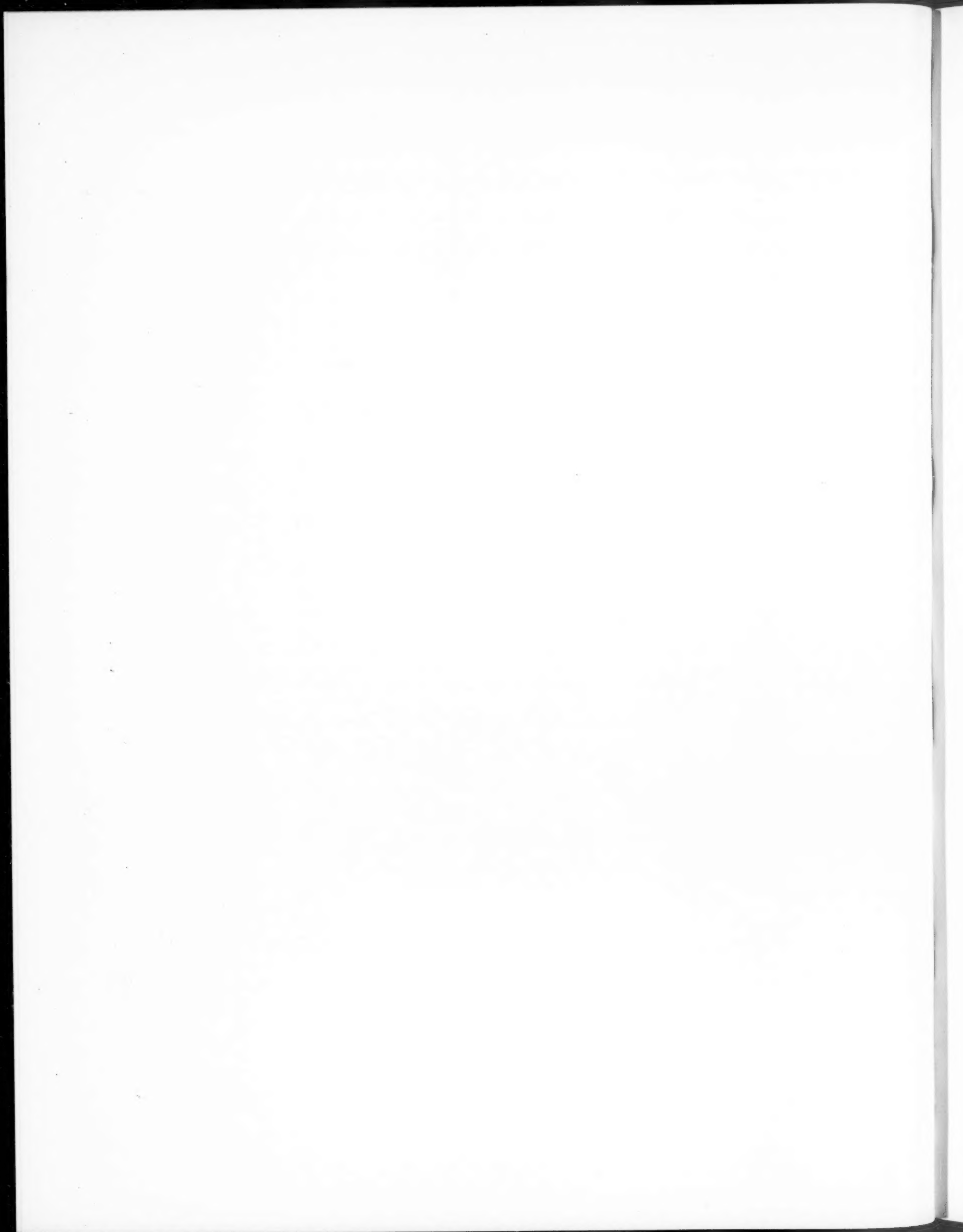


Plate VI.

PORCH, WEST FRONT.

September 1922.





—that the design of the broken pediments above the porticoes, the four towers, as well as the stylobate and steps, was altered without his knowledge or consent. Moreover, in 1742 the interior was burnt out, and in the rebuilding certain grouped columns at the angles were omitted, and later even the columns under the nave ceiling were removed. In 1885 came alterations to the galleries and elsewhere, so Archer cannot be blamed for the grim and depressing interior of the present day. Unlike St. John's, St. Paul's, with the exception of alterations to the seating, the position of the pulpit, and redecoration, is very much as Archer left it. Originally there was a cross passage between the north and south doors, and the pulpit, surmounted by a vast and elaborate sounding-board, with clerk's desk below, stood at the end of the central passage directly in front of the chancel steps. A print of 1841 shows this. When the pulpit was moved the sounding-board was abolished, and, sad to relate, for it must have been a fine thing of carved and moulded oak, was for a time used as the roof of an outside shed. It has now disappeared. One wonders, too, why the original font was sent to a Mission Church abroad and another from Rochester Cathedral put in its place.

In the British Museum (Royal Collection of Maps) are five sketches by Archer for the plan of the church. The one we have reproduced is probably his first idea. The other four agree more nearly with the plan in being as shown by Mr. Bee's measured drawing. Only one of them suggests the great raised platform on which the church stands and the steps up to it, and this differs considerably from what we see to-day. A very noble thing it is, showing a true feeling for dignified effect and a refreshing disregard for economy, for the cost must have been at least one-third of the total outlay. The great semicircular flight of steps up to the portico, divided by radiating walls and piers, is an impressive part of it, and the doubled flights on north and south add richness.

A comparison of the sketch with the executed plan throws an interesting light on the working of the architect's mind in evolving the final design of tower, steps, and west end generally. If the columns in the nave, faintly indicated in pencil, were an

afterthought of Archer's, it looks as if he were hankering after a repetition of what he had done at Westminster, to which reference has been made. He refrained, wisely, we think, for the plan now looks, as all good plans should and do look, well on paper and in being. It is spacious, shapely, well proportioned, and no doubt met the ritual requirements of the day, a point which should be taken into account when criticizing church plans of this date. True that for the sake of external symmetry no difference is made in either size or shape of the great windows where they light the small vestries and rooms over, and that the floor is carried across them. But does not the value of the external effect outweigh this slight lapse from truth of structural

expression? The scale throughout is big, and although the mouldings and other details may verge on the coarse, the whole design has the monumental touch, with far more restraint and refinement than St. John's. The tower and spire are a little meagre perhaps, but the various stages are happily graduated and detailed, and the topmost, whose plan is a quatre-foil of semi-ellipses, is a pretty touch. It is noteworthy, too, that this slight steeple, with its five stages and somewhat complex detail, does not have the effect of being out of scale with the portico and body of the church.

In Allin's undated but evidently contemporary engraving of the south-west view, fine wrought-iron gates with a rich overthrow are shown at the churchyard entrance, and south of the church a large rectory house of striking and unusual design. Likely enough the gate was removed when the churchyard was taken over by the Burial Board and laid out as an open space

in 1878. This is much to be regretted, but far more so is the pulling down of the rectory in 1889, on account of its alleged insanitary state. Surely in that year of grace it should have been possible to make it healthy and habitable! That the site was sold for the erection of industrial dwellings suggests a more potent motive. That there was a good reason for preserving a good piece of architecture and also a link in the history of the parish probably never occurred to anyone concerned. Deptford has suffered ever since from the want of a proper rectory.

GODFREY PINKERTON.



Photo: F. R. Yerbury.

WEST FRONT.

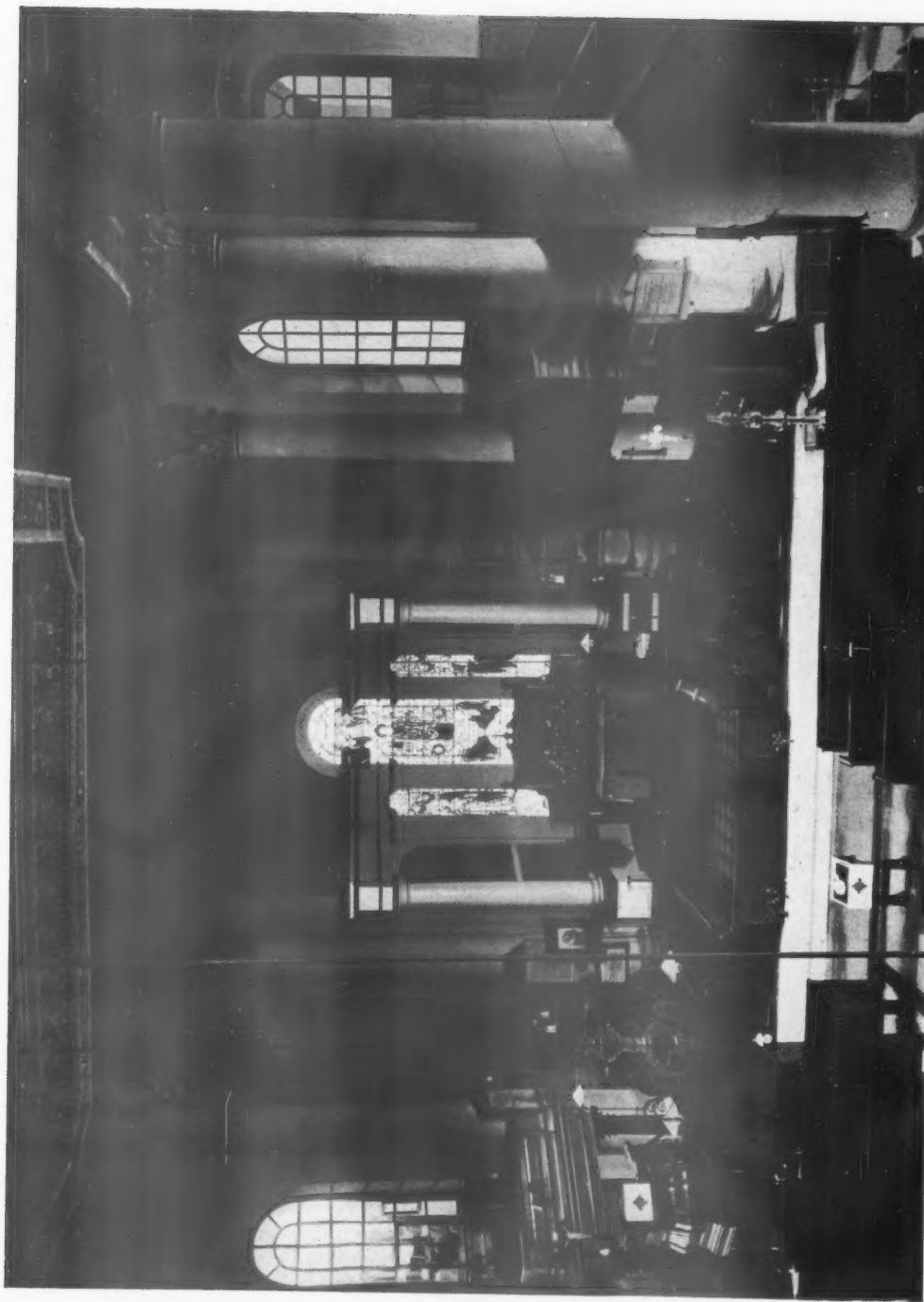


Photo: F. R. Yerbury.



Photo: F. R. Yerbury.

STEPS, SOUTH FRONT.



*Photo: F. R. Yerbury.*

INTERIOR.



# Almshouses for the Butchers' Charitable Institution, Hounslow.

W. H. Ansell, Architect.

THE Butchers' Charitable Institution Almshouses were formerly in a thickly populated area at Walham Green.

These were sold during the war, as it was considered desirable to house the old people in a somewhat healthier environment. A small estate was purchased at Hounslow, and a scheme prepared for the rebuilding of the homes on the new site.

It is intended that the first portion shall form a spacious open forecourt to the Staines Road, having as a centre block the hall and committee-room. The completed scheme will give a rear quadrangle surrounded by detached blocks of pensioners' rooms.

Each flat has a living-room 17 ft. by 11 ft., with larder, store cupboard, and dresser cupboards each side of the fireplace; scullery, having sink, Parkinson gas griller, cupboards, plate rack, and broom store; bedroom, with large hanging cup-

board. The ground-floor flats open on to the veranda at the back; the upper floor having access to the balcony. This will be a feature of the buildings overlooking the quadrangle.

For the external facings 2 in. bricks have been used, with Portland stone bays and columns, the roof being covered with thick green Cornish slates in diminishing courses. All window frames, front doors, etc., are of oak.

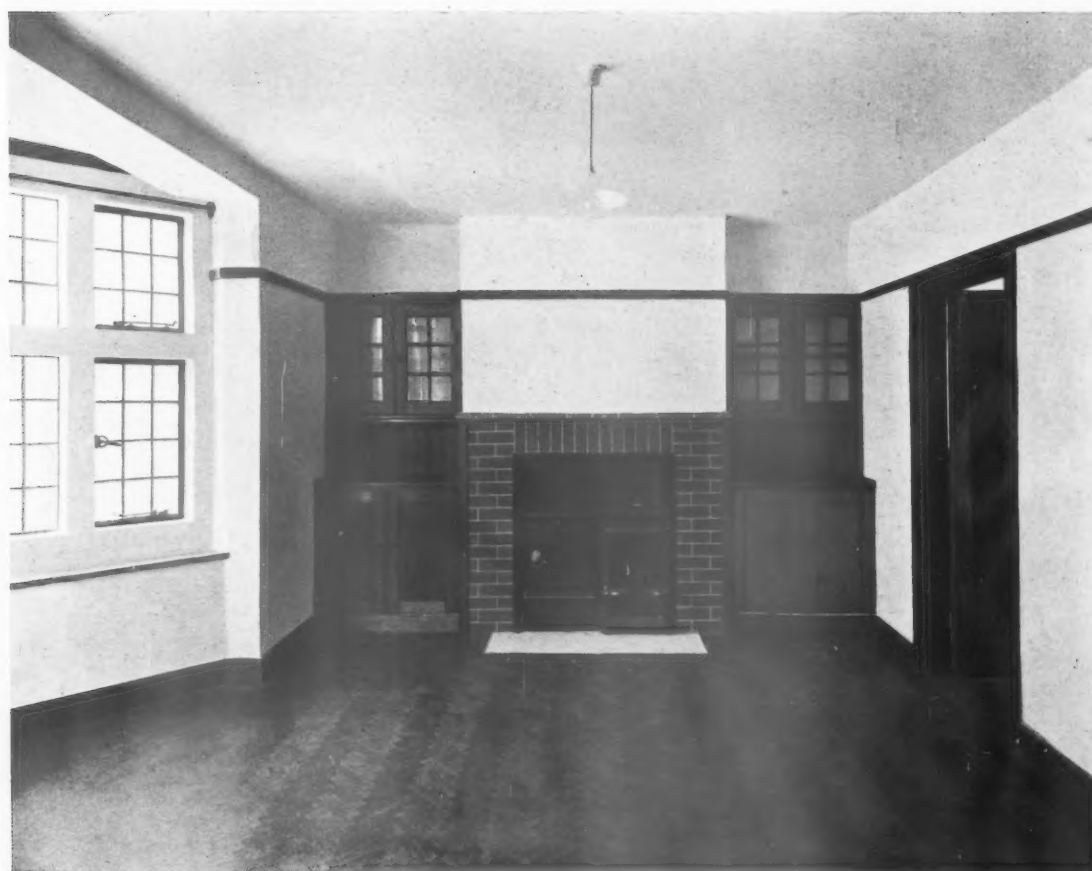
The buildings are fire-resisting, and have wood-block floors and tile window sills. A small well-fitted hand-laundry, and baths for men and women, are provided in a separate building on the site for the free use of the pensioners. The portion already built includes superintendent's and nurse's houses, workshops and coal stores, laundry and rooms for thirty-two pensioners. It is intended to build the hall and committee-room at an early date.



DETAIL OF FRONT ENTRANCES TO PENSIONERS' ROOMS.



GENERAL VIEW OF BLOCK FACING INNER QUADRANGLE.



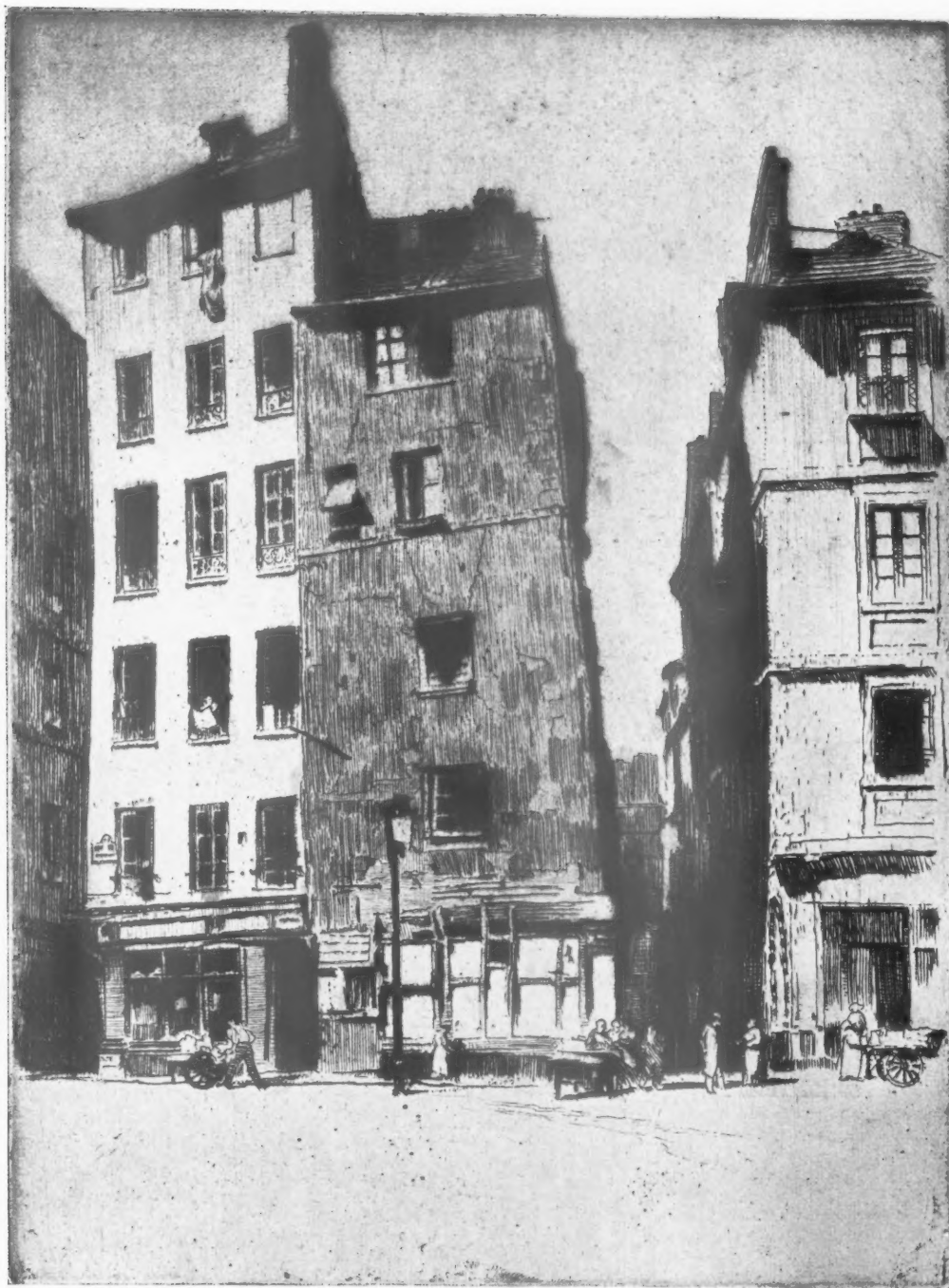
INTERIOR OF A LIVING-ROOM

Etchings by Walter M. Keesey, A.R.E.



PARIS—ARC DE TRIOMPHE.





PARIS—BEAU BOURG.





THE SCAFFOLD.